



Wilkie Collins's Library: A Reconstruction (Bibliographies and Indexes in World Literature)

William Baker

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Wilkie Collins (1824-1889) is a major British Victorian novelist, dramatist, short story writer, and journalist. He is best known today as the author of *The Moonstone*, which T.S. Eliot called the first and greatest English detective novel. He has been the subject of two recent biographies, and a revival of interest in his works is now under way. In particular, there is growing concern with his intellectual development, as witnessed by the 1999 publication of his collected letters. This reconstruction of his library offers a thorough analysis of the books he owned and his response to them and thus illuminates Collins as a reader and writer.

The book begins with a narrative discussion of the contents of Collins's library and its auction. This introductory essay sheds light on the types of books he owned, his use of those texts in his writings, and the dispersion of his collection in 1890. The bulk of the volume provides annotated entries for each item from his library. Entries include publication and bibliographic information, descriptions from sale catalogs, information about the author of the item, citations of the book or author from Collins's letters, and information on the present location or subsequent history of the item. An appendix catalogs paintings and artwork in Collins's possession at the time of his death.

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